

KYOTO

600 years of Kyoto's History and Tradition  
Craftsmanship Passed on, Towards a New Era

# KITAYAMA SUGI

Kyoto/Kitayama Sugi  
PR BOOK



Kyoto City supports sustainable  
development goals (SDGs).



## 600 years of Kyoto's History and Tradition Craftsmanship Passed on, Towards a New Era



Highly evaluated during the Muromachi Period by Sen no Rikyū, who perfected the art of the tea ceremony, Kitayama Sugi (Kitayama cedar) has since been cherished as an indispensable material for tea rooms and sukiya-style architecture. It has been used in renowned architectures such as the Katsura Imperial Villa and the Shugakuin Imperial Villa.

Beyond its role in architecture, Kitayama Sugi has long supported the lives of people in Kyoto through its diverse functions—absorbing greenhouse gases, preserving landscapes, and sustaining biodiversity. However, due to shifts in contemporary lifestyles, demand has continued to decline, and today the Kitayama forestry industry faces severe challenges.

Without Kitayama Sugi, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Japan's iconic sukiya-style architecture could no longer be built. It would further lead to loss of the exceptional silvicultural techniques, carpentry skills, and traditional tools that rely on this wood. If we allow to disappear what has been nurtured over more than 600 years, it would be impossible to recover it.

To use Kitayama Sugi is to protect not only Japanese architectural heritage but also the Kitayama forestry culture itself. With its lustrous surface, fine and beautiful grain, and smooth texture, Kitayama Sugi is a remarkable material that harmonizes beautifully with both traditional and modern architecture. Choosing Kitayama Sugi is what will shape the future of Kitayama forestry.



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# The history of Kitayama Sugi

The history  
of Kitayama  
Sugi

Kitayama Forestry is said to be Japan's oldest forestry tradition. Over the past 600 years, its unique techniques for cultivating Kitayama Sugi and producing Kitayama Maruta have been refined, nurturing a rich cultural heritage in the surrounding region.

In this booklet, we introduce the history, culture, and distinctive qualities of Kitayama Sugi and Kitayama Maruta.



What are Kitayama Sugi?

What are Kitayama Sugi?



## Japan's oldest man-planted cedars with the history of approximately 600 years

### Japan's oldest forestry

Kitayama Sugi are cedars artificially fostered in the northwest area of Kyoto City (Kita-ku and Ukyo-ku, Kyoto City). Kitayama Maruta are made by stripping the trees' barks and polishing their surfaces.

Silviculture of Kitayama Sugi and production of Kitayama Maruta are believed to be started during the Oei era in the Muromachi Period (1394-1428), which is said to be Japan's oldest forestry.

“Tree of Kyoto Prefecture” also certified  
as traditional crafts

Kitayama Sugi was designated as the tree of Kyoto in 1966 and then Kitayama Maruta was designated as “Kyoto Prefecture's traditional craft” and “Kyoto City's traditional industrial product.”

One of the precious woods representing  
Japan

Kitayama Maruta were used for the tearoom designed by Senno Rikyū, which made them essential to the development of tea ceremony culture. They have been further utilized as one of the precious woods representing Japan.

## History

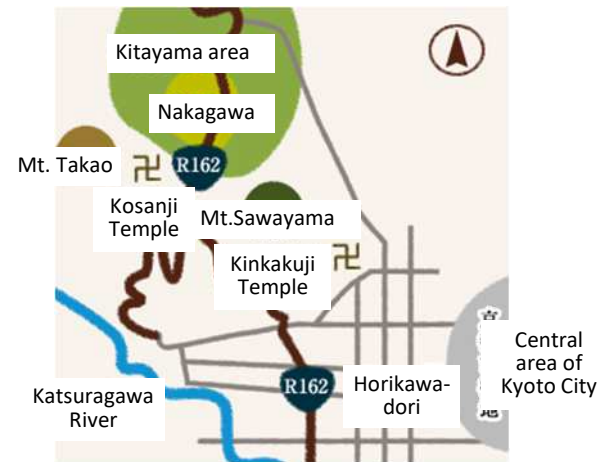
### The History of Kitayama Sugi

Steep and inaccessible land where thick trees cannot be carried out

Kitayama, whose central area is Nakagawa District, Kita-ku, Kyoto City is a cool land suitable for growing cedars with abundant water.

In the communities scattering in scarce land with little flat field among steep mountains, people lived on “mountain work” (forestry) to collect resources from mountains and forests. However, in Kitayama, there is no wide river where they could transport the wooden materials, and therefore it was a difficult place to carry out thick trees.

On the other hand, it is located where people could make a round trip in about half a day by walking on the mountain. People in old times may have considered how to put on the additional value to thin trees which could be carried by manpower.



“Daisugi (coppicing) cultivation,” a unique technique developed in the land with restriction

Planting and silviculture on the steep slopes of Kitayama are very difficult, and seedlings were also very precious. “Daisugi (coppicing) cultivation” was the unique silviculture method devised under such circumstances.

In this method, they grow some dozens or sometimes more than a hundred of stems from one seedling by reproducing one seedling as if it were one forest. This enables them to reduce the planting time, accelerate the cycle of harvesting and produce fine wooden materials. It is said to have been devised by observing natural cedars which reproduce themselves into multiple stems in the snowfall zone in northern Kyoto, which is the unique silviculture method seen only in Kitayama forestry in the world.



## History

### History of Kitayama Sugi

The mother tree over 600 years of age

“Daisugi (coppicing) cultivation” cannot be applied to every kind of cedars.

It needs trees with good DNA which grows straight and robustly. That was “white cedars.” The mother tree in Nakagawa Hachimangu Shrine, with age of over 600 years, still keeps its shape and stands straight.

The offsprings of white cedars which have been reproduced from this tree by cutting create the landscape of Daisugi. Such technique and DNA are bases of Kitayama forestry.



The mother tree “Great Cedar of Hachimangu” with estimated age of over 600 years

“Daisugi” has drawn attention domestically and internationally as trees for viewing.

Especially, “Daisugi” has recently gained so much attention that overseas TV programs features them. As Daisugi can keep growing even on narrow and steep land from one seedling to many stems, which can be expected to contribute to carbon neutrality, they have further drawn attention as trees for viewing thanks to their designability. In 2021, a French TV station “France 2” featured them and in 2022, the German public broadcasting station “ARD” also broadcasted such a program. Many tourists from other countries visit the great Daisugi of over 450 years every day.



“Great Daisugi” with estimated age of over 450 years



## History

### History of Kitayama Sugi

Polished logs were produced from a monk's teachings

There is a legend in Kitayama that a monk became ill on his journey and was going to die in a village of Kitayama. The villagers provided him with food and accommodation and nursed him diligently. Having recovered, the monk advised to the villagers, "Polish logs with sand in the basin of Bodai Waterfall."

After the villagers polished the surface of Kitayama Sugi with their barks stripped, beautiful gloss appeared, which allowed villagers to sell the trees for high price in the city, leading the village to becoming very rich by production of "polished logs."

In the Showa Period, Kitayama Maruta were so popular that they were used almost always for toko-bashiras of Japanese-style rooms.

Polishing work with sand was done in wooden storages with a washing place, among which delicate work was mainly done by women. The logs set against each other waiting to be shipped show us the prosperity of Kitayama forestry.

Bodai  
Waterfall




Polishing logs with sand is said to have been women's work.



Kitayama forestry in the  
past



An aerial photograph of a vast, lush green forest landscape. The terrain is hilly and covered in dense, vibrant green trees. In the lower right portion of the image, a small village with traditional-style buildings is nestled in a valley. The forest appears to be a mosaic of different shades of green, suggesting varying ages and types of trees.

Landscape

## Beautiful Forest Landscapes

Mosaic-like landscape created by the continuous patchwork of small forest stands of different ages

Kitayama forestry requires careful and frequent tending to grow high-quality Kitayama Sugi, which is why each forest owner's holdings are typically small. In addition, in each Kitayama cedar stand, the harvesting area is kept very small—around 0.1 hectares. As a result, each owner's forest contains a mix of small stands with trees ranging from 10 to 40 years old, naturally creating a complex, mosaic-like forest landscape.

Including the unique Daisugi cultivation method, this style of forest management helps prevent harvested areas from becoming bare land, making it an ecologically and environmentally sound approach to forestry.



## Culture

### Cultural assets

The setting of Yasunari Kawabata's masterpiece, *Koto (The Old Capital)*

Having been attracted to the landscape of Kitayama, a literary legend, Yasunari Kawabata, made Nakagawa District, Kyoto City as the setting of his novel *Koto (The Old Capital)* (1962).

One of the main characters, "Naeko" is a girl of the village where Kitayama Sugi are produced. In the novel, scenes of Kitayama Sugi production and the landscape of Nakagawa District mainly with Kitayama Sugi standing straight in line are beautifully described. This novel has been made into dramas and films a number of times, showing various places of Nakagawa District.



Yasunari Kawabata, *The Old Capital*,  
Shincho Bunko

Landscape that  
attracts even cultural  
figures representing  
Japan



A master of Japanese-style painting, Kaii Higashiyama also painted Nakagawa

A master of Japanese-style painting, Kaii Higashiyama gave "Fuyu no Hana (Winter Flowers)" painted with the motif of Kitayama Sugi forest to his friend, Yasunari Kawabata, which made Kawabata so delighted that the writer placed the picture as a frontispiece of the first edition of his novel *Koto (The Old Capital)* published in 1962. Furthermore, Kaii published *Kyoraku Shiki (Four Seasons of Kyoto)* which described four seasons in Kyoto in response to Kawabata's request, among which Kaii gave Kawabata "Kitayama Hatsuyuki (First Snow in Kitayama)" in which he beautifully painted the forests of Kitayama Sugi covered with snow to celebrate Kawabata for winning the Nobel Award as the first Japanese winner.

The pieces created by the artists attracted to the beautiful landscape where Kitayama Sugi standing with dignity still continue to show many people the beautiful landscape of Kitayama Sugi.



Landscape attracting a number of cultural  
figures

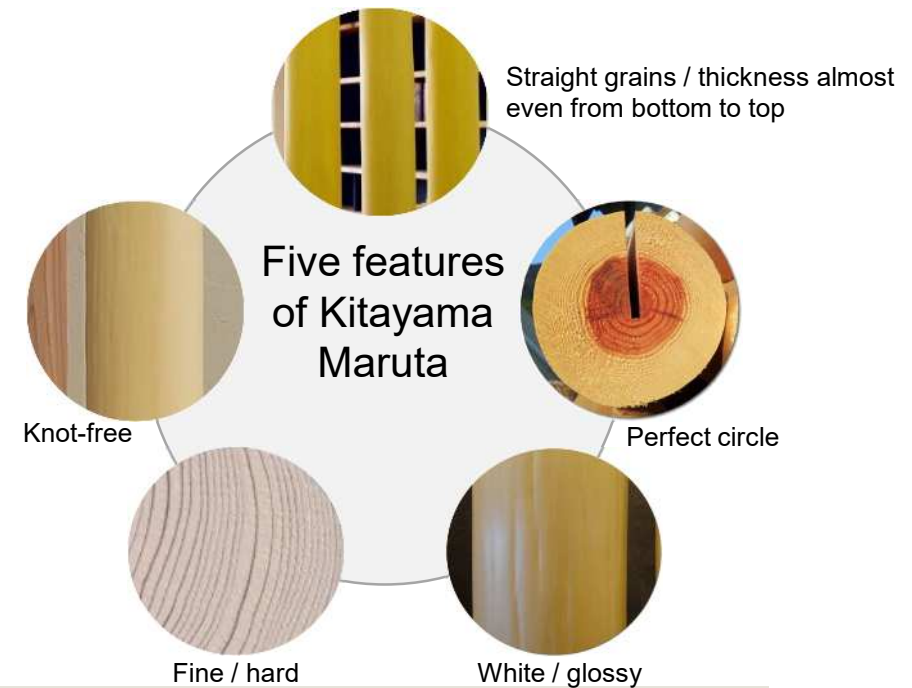


## Feature

### Features of Kitayama Maruta

Thin, strong and beautiful

### Kitayama Maruta



#### Kitayama Maruta quality standards

- Processed from Kitayama Sugi in Kita-ku and Ukyo-ku, Kyoto City and the neighboring areas with a specific quality
- No obvious pruning marks, discoloration and scars on the surfaces
- Bend is within 15mm per 3m.
- Diameter difference between the bottom and top is within 120% per 3m.
- The closest to the perfect circle in principle and diameter difference of the circle area is within 5%.

## Technology

### Two ways of silviculture

## Production of logs with different thickness by two ways of silviculture



### One generation cultivation

The technique to grow straight and knot-free trees in 30-40 years is done by planting each seedling with high density and repeating pruning every two to four years. All trees are harvested at the same time, with the barks stripped off, polished to be made into logs with the top diameter of 9-16cm. The logs have been used for toko-bashira (alcove posts).



### Daisugi cultivation

The technique to make cedar trees shaped like a palm (tree age of 100-200 years) as “Daisugi,” select the stems which grow vertically, finely prune and grow them. The trees which grow thick enough for use are harvested, with the barks stripped off and polished to be made into thin rafters (thin logs). Approximately 100 rafters at maximum can be harvested from one Daisugi.



## Method

### Techniques to produce high-quality logs

## Thorough “Pruning,” polishing and drying produces logs with high added value.

Thorough quality control is taken for Kitayama Sugi and Kitayama Maruta including seedling selection, pruning, drying and polishing.

Especially “pruning,” which cuts off extra branches to control unnecessary growth is very important for beautiful knot-free surfaces, which are the largest characteristics of Kitayama Maruta, the main characteristics of Kitayama Maruta. This process is done with experienced craftsmanship. Throughout the country, it is only Kitayama Sugi that are pruned with such frequency and delicate devotion.

Kitayama Maruta are products that are nicely and carefully fostered and produced by craftsmen with various techniques.



Pruner  
Mr. Tadao  
Nishikawa

“I have been on this job for almost 50 years. There is no end to the techniques, and I am being trained every day facing the trees. It is always delightful when I see Kitayama Sugi beautifully grown after pruning.

I sharpen my tools more than 10 times a day, but their lifetime is only one year or so. I always cut myself in the hand and arm since I sharpen them really sharp.”



Check here for more information on silviculture.

▼Kyoto Kitayama Maruta Union website  
<https://www.kyotokitayamamaruta.com/process/>

## A Kitayama Maruta producer of 40-year of forestry career narrates his devotion.

**Mr. Takehiro Morishita, Morishita Takeshi Shoten**

### Silviculture of Kitayama Sugi is to create art pieces

Pouring the best techniques by the best craftsmen

When I was young, this area (Nakagawa District, Kita-ku and Ukyo-ku, Kyoto City) focused on production of Kitayama Maruta so enthusiastically that they would say “the first son must take over the family business (production of Kitayama Maruta).” It has been almost 40 years since I began to be involved in production of Kitayama Maruta.

What is important for production of Kitayama Maruta is fostering of the mountains, that is to call “planting” and “silviculture.” Since the time for felling of cedars is determined, we spend most of the production period to care for the cedars. Silviculture takes from about 30 to 40 years from the time of planting, which is very short compared to that in other places in the world, and during such period of 30 years, we grow cedars by pouring the best techniques of the best craftsmen to produce Kitayama Maruta. You may think of “planting” as planting trees to grow thick stems,” but in fact, silviculture of Kitayama Sugi is like creating each art piece.

Despite the excellent processing techniques, low-quality materials can impair the value

Although Kitayama Maruta are famous for their beautiful gloss and surface, the work to process them as products is only the “last mile” in silviculture of Kitayama Sugi for 30 to 40 years. Although we improve the processing techniques, low-quality Kitayama Sugi as materials won’t make good logs. How to put the premier value on Kitayama Maruta through every work is a big theme for forestry workers who grow Kitayama Sugi.

The craftsmen have built the techniques to beautifully prune branches by using sharp cutting tools without leaving any unnecessary scars. Each tree has different characteristics and growing conditions greatly differ depending on the characteristics of the trees and of the land where the trees are planted. It is the craftsmen’s skills to figure them out and determine how to prune. The craftsmen prune the branches by “speaking with the trees” to foster Kitayama Sugi.

Passing on the charm of Kitayama Sugi to the next generation, and further to overseas

Continuation is important for forestry. We cultivate the mountains and produce construction materials to make revenue, with which we make investment to silviculture again. Although SDGs is a hot topic recently, forestry has created circulating economics for a long time. However, in these years, as traditional wooden residential structures and creation of space by utilizing beauty of wooden surfaces are decreasing, demands for wooden materials and logs and human resources involved in forestry are decreasing at the same time.

Production of Kitayama Maruta was started with efforts and elaboration of the predecessors, developed and passed on along with development of tea ceremony culture, of sukiya-style and Kyoto-style cutting tools. We would like to show and spread this culture of more than 600 years overseas to continue throughout the future. We hope that the beauty and tradition of Kitayama Maruta will be appreciated and passed on while exploring modern methods of use in the future.



Mr. Takehiro Morishita,  
Morishita Takeshi Shoten



## Current situation

### Current situation of Kitayama forestry

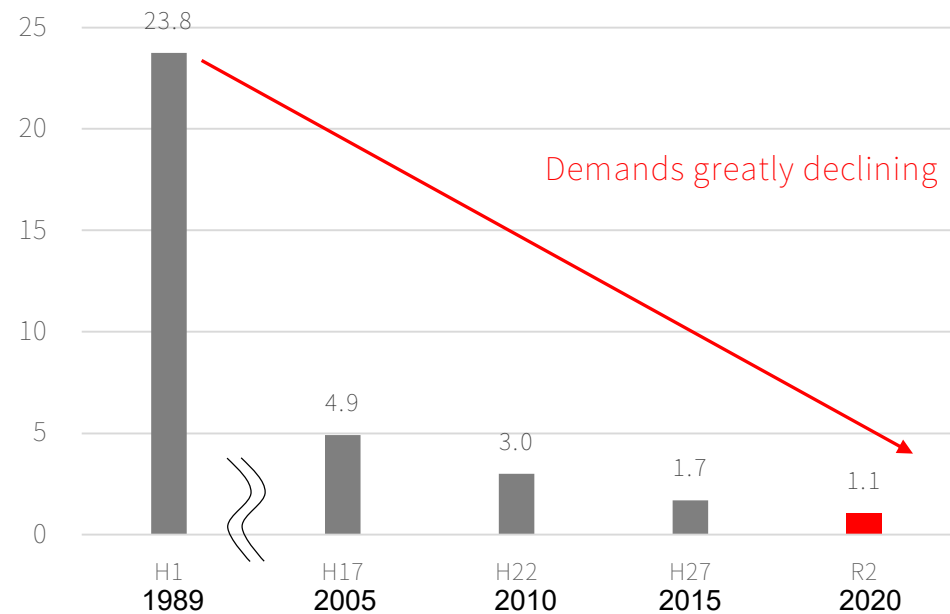
If not promoted, production of the high-quality Kitayama Maruta may not be continued in the future.

Kitayama Maruta have been used for historical structures and tea rooms, including Katsura Imperial Villa and Shugakuin Imperial Villa, and hit the peak of demands as toko-bashiras of Japanese-style rooms after the Showa Period with approximately 240,000 produced in 1989. However, the demands stagnated due to the decrease of Japanese-style rooms, and the production in 2020 was under a tenth of the peak.

In addition, more than 60% of the population of Nakagawa District are the elderly, which leads to an issue of shortage of successors and forestry workers responsible for production of Kitayama Sugi which needs a few times as much care as normal logs from silviculture to process. Continuous decline of production may possibly cause incapability of provision of Kitayama Maruta of the current quality.

Incapability of production of Kitayama Sugi and Kitayama Maruta is a tremendously great loss for sukiya-style architecture representing Japanese culture which is highly evaluated all over the world, which must definitely be prevented.

(ten thousand) Production of Kitayama Maruta



Source: Kyoto City

Special Interviews

# *Special Interviews*

Charms of Kitayama Sugi and Kitayama  
Maruta noted by the users



Mr. Koji Nakamura  
Representative, Nakamura Sotoji Komuten



Mr. Hiroshi Nakamura  
Representative, NAP & Hiroshi Nakamura



# Kitayama Maruta are essential to the creation of the world of Teioku Ichijo

Nakamura Sotoji Komuten in Kyoto is famous both domestically and internationally as a workshop of sukiya-style architecture representing Japan. Their work begins with facing each wood with unique appearance, among which Kitayama Maruta locally produced in Kyoto are the most important materials.

We interviewed Mr. Koji Nakamura, who leads Nakamura Sotoji Komuten as the third head, on the charm of Kitayama Maruta.

## PROFILE

Mr. Koji Nakamura

Representative, Nakamura Sotoji Komuten

Born in 1972. The third representative of "Nakamura Sotoji Komuten." After graduating from the course of Architecture and Design, Kyoto Institute of Technology, he served as the general manager designing and building the "Haneda Airport International Terminal Edo Market Place" at "Nakamura Sotoji Komuten." In addition, he was involved in the design and construction of "Huawai Kyoto Town" in Shenzhen, China as well as being in charge of the repair work of "Ise Jingu Shrine Tea Room," "Daitokuji Temple Shinju-an," "Nanzenji Temple Hyotei," etc. In 2021, he was engaged in the interior decoration and designing of "Shinsho-an," a private hotel opened in Nanzenji, Kyoto.





Mr. Nakamura speaking of the charm of Kitayama Maruta in the workshop. There are always a few types of Kitayama Maruta there.

He also explains the beauty of grains. The photo in the right is of the beauty of grain of a "chamfered column." It is only Kitayama Maruta that have such precise annual tree rings despite their thinness.

## What makes Kitayama Maruta unique?

Many people may think of polished logs which are used for toko-bashiras when we speak about Kitayama Maruta. However, Nakamura Sotoji Komuten seldom uses simple polished logs for toko-bashiras.

"Kitayama Maruta are essential to the construction of buildings full of natural taste and simple atmosphere called 'Maruta Fushin (log-based construction)' and 'sukiya-style (tearoom) structures.' As you say, being popular after being used for toko-bashiras, Kitayama Maruta have been considered as polished logs for alcoves. However, we barely use plain polished logs for toko-bashiras. We use them for surrounding pillars and rafters to support eaves, and plates to receive rafters."

Cedars are originally as common as Japanese cypresses in construction materials. There are many famous places of production such as "Akita Sugi," "Yoshino Sugi," "Owase Sugi," which are well known. But then why do we still choose Kitayama Maruta? For more than 90 years after the first head, Mr. Sotoji Nakamura established the construction firm in Kyoto in 1931, Nakamura Sotoji Komuten has used Kitayama Maruta. Mr. Koji Nakamura tells us such reasons.

"I think Kitayama Maruta are one and only among cedars produced in Japan. That means that they have natural appearance and beauty. Logs may give you an image of being rough such as the ones that are used for log houses. However, Kitayama Maruta have very delicate appearance although they are logs. They are knot-free, hard and precise, as well as white and glossy by unique polishing process. What is more, each log is slightly different, and some of them have small dents here and there, and others have dimple-like wavy bumps that are called 'twists.' 'Face skin columns' are produced with log barks left on the four corners instead of making them into logs when used for pillars. The grains that appear in Kitayama Maruta at this point are distinct and very beautiful. Since they take a long time to grow under a strict climate, their annual tree rings are fine. Furthermore, carefully fostered, they grow straight with beautiful annual tree rings of concentric circle. The beauty of grains when they are produced into chamfered columns comes from such efforts."





Although there are many log materials in the world, it is true that Kitayama Maruta are the only logs that have such small diameters as well as delicate beauty. The first head, Mr. Sotoji Nakamura is said to have really loved Kitayama Maruta.

“My grandfather, Sotoji Nakamura was originally from Toyama. Don’t you think the name “Sotoji” (‘soto’ means ‘outside’ and ‘ji’ means ‘two’ or ‘second’) is special? The family business was supposed to be taken over by the first son, and the second and third sons had to go out from the house and make a living by themselves. His name seems to have exactly expressed such custom. My grandfather became a carpenter after an apprenticeship in Toyama and moved to Kyoto in 1931. Kyoto had great culture with craftsmen to support it. He thought Kyoto was the only place where excellent products could be produced since it did not only have carpenters, but also good soil and plastering craftsmen, Chinese paper and Japanese paper and Japanese paper craftsmen, furthermore wax paper master who polish lacquer, fine metal fabrication craftsmen and cabinetmakers. He may have had a chance to encounter Kitayama Maruta only because he came to Kyoto.”

After the war, Mr. Sotoji Nakamura met Urasenke that is responsible for tea ceremony culture. Mr. Koji Nakamura says that a new way was explored by his grandfather becoming Urasenke’s carpenter.

His grandfather’s sensibility and talent may have flourished thanks to the chance to engage in construction of tearooms domestically and internationally one after another including the iemoto’s (the head family of a school) tearooms. Under such circumstances, his eye and technique may have improved more and more as the user of Kitayama Maruta. He would look around the lumber stores to select the best ones whenever he had time, and purchased all the timbers he liked without deciding the use, which sometimes made trouble to the people around him. I heard that he would go to the storage during breaktime, where he looked around those timbers and enjoyed making plans of how to use them for certain workplaces.”



## Carpenter technique inspired by Kitayama Maruta

Since Kitayama Maruta are natural materials, high-quality technique is of course necessary for treatment of the logs.

“Although they look similar to each other, the thickness of each log is slightly different, and the thickness of the bottom area close to the ground and that of top area are different. Their perfect circles have some distortion because they are not artificial. We cannot use them for construction materials without understanding such characteristics. This helped me improve my carpentry,” says Mr. Koji Nakamura.

“By using a machine to trim them into timber with a square cross section, they can be of the same size in every part horizontally and vertically balanced. However, the logs are not. Advanced woodworking is required to assemble pillars, beams and plates with logs all horizontally and vertically placed. Moreover, since foundation stones at the bottom of pillars are also natural, the height and shape of each stone are different. The technique is to tighten the logs without using nails and hardware. The technique has been perfected in order to construct robust structures without inhibiting the beauty of Kitayama Maruta, which has been passed on from one generation to another over hundreds of years. Because of Kitayama Maruta’s unique beauty, there is nothing to compare it to. Desire to use these materials without losing the natural beauty — It must have been Kitayama Maruta which evoked and advanced the technique.”



One Kitayama Maruta supports the eave.  
The logs are used for rafters with eaves boards lined straight to make floating expression and contrast.





A tatami room of 10 jo (1 jo = 1.62 m<sup>2</sup>) with "Deshoin (Samurai-residence style attached towards an alcove. Paper sliding doors are replaced by bamboo doors. Pillars are chamfered columns made by shaving the four surfaces of Kitayama Maruta to show grains. A big eave supported by small-diameter Kitayama Maruta sticks out into the garden, connecting the building and the garden.



## As the material to express Teioku Ichijo

The third head introduced his own house, which clearly showed us what kind of world the first head, Mr. Sotoji Nakamura and Nakamura Sotoji Komuten aimed to make and how they took advantage of Kitayama Maruta for sukiya-style architecture. Mr. Koji Nakamura's house and tearoom are secretly located in a corner of residential area within Kyoto City and cannot be seen in whole from the street. Along the street, a simple fence of galvanized iron surrounds the buildings, which makes them invisible up to the end of the premise through the small gate.

"This house and tearoom were designed and built by my grandfather 35 years ago when he was 80. He was strict with himself saying a carpenter like him was not supposed to build a great house and if his craftsmen drove a large-size car,

he would scold them telling them to know their places. But in his later years, he said, 'I am already 80, so it is the time.' and built this house with all his desires."

The tatami room of 10 jo with Deshoin is full of Mr. Sotoji Nakamura's unique style. The pillars are of course Kitayama Maruta, including the chamfered columns made by shaving the four surfaces of the logs to show the grains. They were applied because unprocessed logs were too rugged. The large eave supported by Kitayama Maruta (rafter) of small diameter extends towards the garden, connecting the building with the garden.

"There is a term 'Teioku Ichijo' in sukiya-style architecture. It is a concept to see a garden and building as a whole without dividing them.

This tatami room was certainly built to follow that idea, and for example, the garden is placed immediately outside the window without a wide porch. For common Japanese-style houses, a wide boarded porch or engawa (verandah) is made under the eave with glass door or shutter outside. That even makes the room wider, but my grandfather intentionally connected the tatami room immediately to the garden. The garden is located close, the eave we see is large, and the log of rafters can be clearly seen. Continuity and unity of the building and garden become further reinforced. The spirit of 'Teioku' Ichijo was truly of importance to my grandfather."



The Japanese-style room where we can clearly see the rafters





Mr. Koji Nakamura explains the view seen from the window. This is the area in which Mr. Sotoji Nakamura most focused on.

Relation with the garden was well presented in the way they make desho in and they set up the window glass beside the alcove.

“Deshoin is made with the design for people to be able to sit with their legs down. Therefore, it was not placed as a formality, but could be actually used as a daily writing space. In the front, they planted a pine tree with beautifully-grown branches and a maple tree that shows autumn leaves with an old Korean lantern. We can enjoy the views spreading in front of our eyes forever.

In addition, the windows of desho in have three sliding doors, which allows an opening of the size of two sliding doors when open. Normally, they set four sliding doors to slide to both right and left, so three doors are irregular. Yet they prioritized the larger opening. Moreover, although the space beside the alcove is normally a shelf, we have a glass window to show the outside view. It is truly a superb design of ‘Teioku Ichijo.’”

## The house makes us aware of being in the nature

This house built by Mr. Sotoji Nakamura in his late years was succeeded to and lived in by the third head, Mr. Koji Nakamura. The Kitayama Maruta pillars and mud walls have been the same for 35 years. The Kitayama Maruta used in places have turned their color into glossy amber and the mud walls also shows elegant atmosphere.

“I feel that this house fit more in this neighborhood now than when it was just built, and has become an essential part of the landscape,” says Mr. Koji Nakamura.

“I wonder who expected this house to gain such significance after a few decades. There should have been no one who clearly imagined

such color. However, most Japanese people feel that change promoted by age is beautiful, and can appreciate such change. I think that Kitayama Maruta connect the nature of gardens and buildings and people’s lives, showing the beauty of aging and the essential beauty we should make importance of.

Kitayama Sugi and Kitayama Maruta——They remind us of the fact that we live in the nature by coexisting with it.



Enjoy the world of sukiya-style architecture produced by Nakamura Sotoji Komuten!

## Accommodation facilities built with Kitayama Sugi for your comfort



### THE HIRAMATSU KYOTO

A hotel opened in March, 2020 in Kyoto City. It is an elegant hotel of tradition and innovation, created with devotion to the technique and philosophy of sukiya-style architecture based on a Kyomachiya-style building of 120 years in Muromachi-dori.

\*Kitayama Sugi are used for the both ends of one-plate keyaki (Japanese zelkova) counter used in “Kappo Izumi” on the 1st floor of the hotel.

361 Ennogyo-cho Muromachi-dori Sanjo-Agaru  
Nakagyo-ku Kyoto  
TEL : 075-211-1751  
<https://www.hiramatsuhotels.com/kyoto/>



### Shinsho-an

A hotel with only four rooms built in Okazaki, Kyoto. Each room was created with an abundance of natural materials which were strictly selected including Kitayama Maruta with devotion to traditional sukiya-style architecture technique to make the ultimate modern Japanese-style space.

91-5 Okazaki Enshojicho Sakyo Ward  
Kyoto\*  
\*Phone number not listed (referral only)  
<https://shinsho-an.com/>



### Takayamaso Hanano

A calm inn with flowers located in the highland of Arima hot springs. Many printed art pieces and traditional art pieces are displayed in the building. To symbolize its sensibility, a sukiya-style suite “Hutaba-aoi” was created in spring 2022 with delicate devotion to the building materials and details, including Kitayama Maruta.

400-1, Arima Town, Kita Ward, Kobe City, Hyogo Pref.  
TEL : 078-904-0744  
<https://www.arima-hanano.com/>



## Using logs will lead to return of lives harmonized with nature.

An architect, Mr. Hiroshi Nakamura, has built a number of structures which almost melt into the land with rich nature. While nature may have adverse effects of people's lives, we are in need of architecture that allows us to feel the peace and harmony of nature. The important materials used for such concept are Kitayama Maruta.

### PROFILE

Mr. Hiroshi Nakamura, Representative  
NAP & Hiroshi Nakamura

Born in Tokyo in 1974. Completed the first term of the doctoral course of Architecture, Graduate School of Science and Technology, Meiji University in 1999, in which he joined Kengo Kuma & Associates. In 2002, he established NAP & Hiroshi Nakamura. Currently special guest professor at School of Science and Technology. His motto is structuring of an organic liaison between "architecture, nature and bodies" by "microscopic design" which supports emotional movement. He also aims to harmonize "design that exists only there" based on the history, culture, industry as well as materials, etc. of that region. He has recently discovered such essence in Japan's traditional architecture and garden culture and has been working on reconstruction of them.





It is the time to rethink how society coexists with nature.

Mr. Hiroshi Nakamura aims to create an organic liaison between architecture, nature and bodies through designs that support behaviors of the nature and people, emotional movement. The buildings he has constructed during 20 years of his career since starting his firm have been highly evaluated as “architecture that is one of a kind” and which is connected to the history, culture, industry as well as materials of that region. He admits one of his own current issues is how to produce city lives harmonized with the nature-and how the residences should be to make it come true.

“I think it is the time to rethink how society coexists with nature. The human society which has destroyed nature by the anthropocentrism has been enormously threatened by nature such as Covid-19, worldwide climate change, wildfire, and torrential rain. I would like to create architecture that make us aware in our bodies that nature is uncontrollable and that we are kept alive by nature.”

People seek in cities “residence with a mountain-like atmosphere in an urban area”

The element that makes us feel nature in urban areas is a garden. Mr. Nakamura says that he always tries to create a green space and make continuity between the garden and interior space even in a limited residential area where it is difficult to make an open and wide garden.

“Gardens are considered as reconstruction of nature. Although they are not pure nature, it is a place where we can interact with nature. It is essential to let such a place and interior space have an organic liaison in urban residences. It is true that the housing environment in urban areas is difficult to have a large garden, but for example, by using optical glass façade which I often use, we can take in light and feel the presence of the city while securing privacy. Originally, Japanese people have made various efforts for creation of space where we can feel nature in urban areas. One such example is “residence with mountain-like atmosphere in an urban area” devised by the tea masters in Sakai in the 17th century. At that time, Sakai was the world’s most populated city.

With such background, the tea masters made space that could make them feel nature in residences in a minimized form. This idea should be effective for the present urban residences. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, people would seek out living in two different bases and camping became popular. Sauna is also popular. I think that the time has come when we think it is ideal to live in the nature or in the environment where we can feel close to nature. One of my greatest themes is to produce architecture with a garden to create atmosphere like mountains even being in an urban area.”





Logs show us how to live  
in a harmony with nature

Mr. Nakamura thinks that it is necessary to make efforts to rebuild a connection with nature also for materials which form space. For example, a storage door which Mr. Nakamura used for a house has no handle. He intentionally chose a wood with many knots to make all of them into holes so that the door can be opened with a finger placed into the holes.

“Normally, we place a handle where it is the most convenient for people. But with this door, people naturally make themselves fit to it. I think that relationship between materials and people is originally like this.”

Mr. Nakamura often uses logs as building materials, which is, according to him, because of the same reason.

“Wooden materials become square timbers of the same size after they are processed. But if not processed, each log is of different thickness and moreover, one log may have a different diameter size between the bottom and the top. Some have a slight dent on the surface, and some are a little twisted.

But craftsmen interact with each of those logs and assemble them through a process of delicate handwork. With those unexpected shapes, humans make various things by elaboration. The way of living by fitting ourselves to nature, that is to say philosophy may be reflected there. That is why I like logs.”





©Koji Fujii / TOREAL



©Koji Fujii / TOREAL

Unbleached Kitayama rafters are used to ease the Japanese taste. The eave boards are feather arrow pattern.

It is an architect's mission to present the value of Kitayama Maruta

While there is a movement to actively use Kitayama Maruta to enjoy Japanese design for inns, restaurants and commercial architectures, opportunities to use Kitayama Maruta for residence are drastically decreasing. If the demands decline, its experienced craftsmen may disappear, and even maintenance of the mountains inevitably becomes difficult. Mr. Nakamura thinks that we must present the charm of Kitayama Maruta to the clients and create more opportunities to use them with their understandings in order to use Kitayama Maruta more, and the architect's role in this is indispensable.

"I think that we need to make efforts to use Kitayama Maruta not only for Japanese style rooms and tearooms of sukiya-style architecture, but also for residences in the modern urban living. For example, for 'The House of Cascade,' we created a garden with optic glass façade to make it look like a waterfall and set the eave to stick out further from the interior. The eave is supported by rafters, but included a herringbone pattern between the roof board and rafters to avoid excessive Japanese taste for modern western-style space.

In addition, the rafters are supported by the plates of Kitayama Maruta to look continuous from the interior to the external eave, but they are actually cut at the plates. Because it is essential for a residence to be airtight and have a high thermal insulation for high performance, it may be necessary to segregate at the plates.

However, since we used the material which was originally one same wood outside and inside seamlessly, we worked to make them look seamless. This is one of our efforts to use logs for modern residence. Furthermore, speaking of other wooden materials, there was a case when we assembled a half-split log and drum-shaped log with two surfaces cut off to make a structure material. This was for those who do not have special craftsmanship to be able to use logs by keeping strength and redundancy of logs. In addition, by this way of use, we can maintain a building by replacing only a part of it. I think Kitayama Maruta can be used more if we make efforts."

The log architecture produced by Mr. Nakamura makes us think about how people should live in nature and how the relationship between nature and people should be.



Sukiya-style architecture is one of the traditional Japanese architecture forms.

This style thoroughly focuses on the materials and technique and presents delicacy and elegance to deliver “wabi-sabi” atmosphere. It is space where we can calm our minds and recapture ourselves in nature. Here are some of those structures.

# The history of Japanese architecture



## Ise Jingu Shrine Tearoom “Seigetsu”

In Ise Jingu Shrine located in Ise City, Mie Prefecture, there is Jingu Tearoom contributed by Mr. Konosuke Matsushita who served as the chairman of Ise Jingu Shrine Sukeikai (worship meeting) from 1974 to 1984. Not only as an excellent executive, Mr. Konosuke Matsushita was also a tea master who knew the spirit of wabi-sabi and decided to dedicate “a tearoom which will sustain for 300 years and become a historic heritage” to the shrine to wish exaltation of Japanese spirit of tradition and requested such construction to Mr. Sotoji Nakamura. At this time, Mr. Konosuke Matsushita had already requested tearooms to be built in ten places all over Japan to Mr. Sotoji Nakamura, who had been considered by everyone as the leading person of sukiya-style architecture. The Jingu Tearoom was his final production. The design was supervised by the current Urasenke Iemoto, Sen Soshitsu. The groundbreaking ceremony took place in March 1983 and it was completed two years after in April 1985.

Such tearoom was built in the place called “Momiji-en (autumn leaf garden) on the left after crossing the Uji-bashi Bridge. The building consists of three wings of “Shin,” “Gyo,” and “So.” “Shin” is an upper-layer room with class built in Shoin-zukuri style, surrounded by wide balconies with Irimoya-styled cypress bark roof. “Gyo” has two halls with gabled roof and young pine tree pattern in transoms. “So” is a 4.5-jo room with a shingle roof. It was named “Seigetsu” by Kazuko Takatsukasa, the shrine priest at that time. Seigetsu means the moon after rain stops, meaning the clear mind with no clouds. It is a tearoom infused with the surrounding nature by simple and beautiful materials including Kitayama Sugi with low and deep eaves. It is known as a masterpiece architecture of the Showa Period full of “iki (chic, fashionable)” of sukiya-style technique.

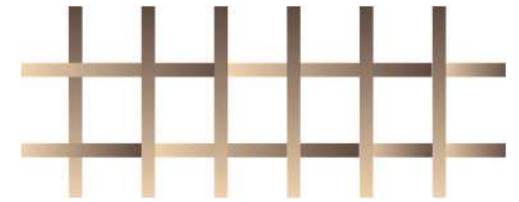


The wide balconies outside the upper layer made with classy taste. The baseplate is of Japanese red pine. Made from one tree to unify the color tone.

The round plate and small rafter log of Kitayama Maruta bring out pure beauty. The logs of the same thickness were strictly selected from among many logs.



External appearance of 4.5-jo tearoom,  
Seigetsu  
Shingle roof.



Seigetsu eaves with finished soffit ceiling  
(left)



Plates, pillars, angle rafters are made of  
polished Kitayama Maruta. The back  
boards are made of Japanese thuja  
(Kurobe) shingle, wrapped with medake  
bamboo

Interior of Seigetsu (right)

A beautiful lighting fixture made of  
Japanese paper hanging from the ceiling  
(right)





Shuzenji, Izu  
Asaba, Villa Tenko

Shuzenji hot spring is Izu's oldest hot spring which is said to be opened by Kobo Daishi 1,200 years ago. "Asaba," one of the best inns in Japan is located there. It is said that Asaba was started as a facility for temple stay opened by Yakuro Yukitada Asaba in 1489 at "Shuzenji," which was established by Kukai (Kobo Daishi) and has been passed on within one family of Asaba for 530 years until now.

Supervised by: Kazuhide Asaba, Head  
Designed by: Masahiro Yokokawa Design Firm  
Constructed by: Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.





The complete outlook of "Villa Tenko". It is as large as 220m<sup>2</sup>. This luxury space accommodates only one party a day.



Comfortable space with traditional Japanese taste.

The toko-bashiras are made of polished logs of Kitayama Sugi. Their one-and-only elegant beauty emerges in the soft light.

The expansive land of approximately ten thousand tsubo (1 tsubo = 3.3 m<sup>2</sup>) sprawling by the Katsuragawa River is covered by green, and on the pond of 600 tsubo with the background of bamboo woods, we can see the "no (traditional and ritual Japanese dance)" stage contributed by Viscount Toshika Maeda of Kaga. It was dismantled and reconstructed in the late Meiji Period. There are a total of eleven guest rooms in the sukiya-style building built to surround it, and in addition to it, "Villa Tenko" was completed in summer 2019. Every room is an excellent space maximized for comfort, having been made of the strictly selected traditional Japanese materials by detailed design, among which "Villa Tenko" was finished with rare resources difficult to obtain in the present time, with design and traditional construction method. This style succeeds the beauty of Japanese tradition and makes great use of every piece of craftsmanship such as plastering and fittings, that is to say the ultimate "iki" of Japanese architecture.

Kitayama Maruta are used as the essential materials. Polished logs are used for the toko-bashira and toko-gamachi (bottom beam) and chamfered columns, pillars with the barks of wood remaining on the four corners of the log are used for key points of the room.

Kitayama Maruta are selected because they can express elegant and delicate gentleness that no other wooden materials can provide. sukiya-style architecture, which was created with the sensitivity of "wabi-sabi" of tea ceremony culture is not the symbol for the rulers to show off their power. It is rather humble, projecting slight essence of wild beauty and gently providing a space of comfort where people can calmly face each other or enjoy the beauty of nature in every season. Kitayama Maruta, which have some roundness and even delicate beauty with no roughness create uniquely and quietly harmonizing beauty in the dignified world constructed with straight lines.


"Villa Tenko" was completed under the leadership of Asaba's current head, through collaboration of the architect, construction company and craftsmen of all sections who understood the head's passion. They aimed for a culmination of the world of traditional beauty which has been protected by the Asaba family for more than 500 years, of course, for not only for viewing, but as the best space for hospitality.



The project started from selecting Kitayama Maruta. The ones used for the toko-bashiras are thinner than normal ones. For sukiya-style architecture, there is an original standard called “kiwari (wood allocation),” defining the ratio of width and thickness of each member in detail including pillars. Good thickness and length of a toko-bashira for the frontage of an alcove, and the standard size of “otoshigake (tokonoma lintel)” and toko-gamachi proportional to it are determined. However, for “Villa Tenko,” they intentionally selected thinner toko-bashiras and accordingly the sizes of each member were considered to make a good balance. “Kiwari” is not an inviolable rule. In fact, to persist in it is against the free and creative spirit unique to sukiya-style. With consideration to create space for the best comfort, the head of Asaba as well as the architect, on-site supervisor of the construction company and craftsmen gathered at the construction site to discuss the precise adjustment by millimeters, such as “a little thinner pillar, a little lower, or less tilted, etc.” in order to complete the quiet and calm room. Each of such considerations is not visible, but those efforts create the space so comfortable that guests find it very calming although they are not certain about the reason.

Among all materials, the head selected the excellent pieces of polished logs with natural grooves subtly appearing. Such bumps are not too deep or shallow, and the surfaces have delicate change of expressions. Their appearance shown in the soft light coming from outside is like an art itself, being the symbol of the unique world view of “Villa Tenko.” In addition, for the chamfered columns standing in the four corners, they made prior consideration of where they would place which materials in which direction according to strict selection of each grain (nakamoku) appearing in the pedestal from among many materials.

In the modern time, there are fewer houses with Japanese-style rooms. It may be because we are losing the sensitivity to discover beauty in our daily lives and cherish beauty in subtleness, which are the essence of the delicate and beautiful Japanese culture appreciated in the world. It is the time for us to create what is truly valuable and show its essence in order to pass on the traditional beauty of Japanese architecture. “Villa Tenko” is a precious work and Kitayama Maruta bears a very important role in that sense.



Kitayama Maruta selected for toko-bashiras are thinner logs than toko-bashiras generally used. Since expression of the surface is subtle and no disguise is allowed, it challenged the craftsmanship.

## Techniques required for carpenters using logs

Mr. Masatoshi Kawasaki, Carpenter, Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

Only special craftsmen can handle logs requiring techniques for process.

I am normally engaged mainly in construction of general wooden houses. But I also sometimes work on Japanese-style architecture of shrines and Buddhist temples and sukiya-style architecture, large-scale wooden buildings such as kindergarten and elderly's homes (these are collectively called special properties). Since carpenter culture is based on the relationship between the master and apprentices, I naturally began to work more on special properties due to my master who often dealt with them. In our company, we standardly apply log materials for plates and pillars to support "shimoya (shed roof attached to the house roof)" for general Japanese-style houses, so we have more opportunities to process and build with logs, but we deal with way more logs when constructing sukiya-style architecture.

Logs are specially called "special materials" in our company to distinguish them from other general wooden materials which are preliminarily cut at the factory.

It is because logs are not suitable for line production at the factory and the craftsmen's skills are required. "Logs select craftsmen." In most processes where logs are used as construction materials, streamlining by machine is impossible and carpenters must work only with their own techniques. The carpenters who deal with logs are required to be able to use tools like "chisel" and "round chisel." They also need techniques to take care of these special tools.

There are no flat surfaces on logs, and the circle shapes and thickness are not unified. Since each of them has different characters, the skill to define "which position is appropriate for process" is important. In particular, "inking (marking)" to mark the starting point of the blading process and "hikarizuke" to trace the shape of the material to be attached to such as the bottom end of a round pillar placed on a cobblestone and the joint area of a round plate and round pillar to completely attach them together require abundant experiences and carpenters' inspiration.

In recent years, there are fewer carpenters who can use "chisels" and logs. Many carpenters do not have "round chisels," but without a round chisel, they cannot do anything with logs. While the technique to use "chisels" and "round chisels" are important for improving carpenters' skills, carpenters who become interested in such techniques may be unfortunately decreasing due to declination of needs for Japanese-style houses. Each time I am set to take a sukiya-style architecture project and see logs on the wooden material list for me to process, I get unexpectedly excited to "present my skills." Yet, it is also true that I know I must do my best since such job is accompanied by various difficulties.

Kitayama Maruta have packed annual rings and hard, and easy to process precisely. After a sukiya-style architecture building is completed by assembling with the processed logs, I feel happy and proud because of the time taken for completion.



Round chisel actually used by craftsmen (upper)  
Tough work of "hikarizuke" (lower)



Expansion of new way of  
utilization and application

From logs and board materials to wood products.

Kitayama Maruta have been recently used in the way beyond the traditional custom.

They are solid and strong, and stay beautiful even after being processed.

Here are examples of the expansive use of Kitayama Maruta.

# The history of Utilization of Kitayama Sugi



## Special Interview

We will be proposing a  
new way of use as a  
“sukiya venture.”

“Shinzone” is a fashion brand under the concept of “casual fashion that goes with denim.” Mr. Masato Yoshihara of YOSHIHARAGUMI boldly used Kitayama Maruta for the interior of its new store. The new way of using Kitayama Maruta as applied to modern space was highly evaluated. We interviewed Mr. Yoshihara on his approach from conception to construction.

### PROFILE

Mr. Masato Yoshihara, Representative,  
YOSHIHARAGUMI INC.

After graduating from the Graduate School of Musashino Art University, he entered “Fujimori Komuten,” a sukiya-style architecture company based in Tokyo. Then after working for “Sankakuya Inc.,” engaged in Japanese-style architecture based in Kyoto, and entered YOSHIHARAGUMI in 2015 to start up the design department “YOSHIHARAGUMI.INC.”







## Considering the store interior of modern fashion brand

Mr. Yoshihara leads a first-class architect firm, YOSHIHARAGUMI. Based in Kyoto, he works extensively to develop services including architectural design, interior design and product design of various buildings including residential buildings. He worked on the interior design of “Shinzone Omotesando” opened in May 2023 and drew great attention beyond the fashion industry for boldly using Kitayama Maruta for the store design of an urban flag shop of a modern fashion brand.

“I have worked with Shinzone since they developed the fashion brand called ‘takes.’ using 100% bamboo thread, and they requested me to be in charge of the interior design of the headquarters which would be relocated to Omotesando,” says Mr. Yoshihara.

“Shinzone originally developed denim clothing which can be enjoyed by wearing out as their main products. I, myself, have also valued the gradual aging beauty of unprocessed materials while working in the sukiya-style architecture industry for a long time before the establishment of YOSHIHARAGUMI, and I could sympathize with that point. This time, they also gave me the keywords of sustainability and SDGs as the basic concept of design.”



I proposed to use “Kitayama Maruta,” but not simple logs.

Although some potential materials such as recycled materials and new materials were proposed in the meeting for the interior of the new store, he was not very attracted to those materials.

“The interior of a store can sustain only for four to five years at longest. Even with recycled materials, the process of dismantling, separating, transporting by truck using gasoline and further recycling takes a certain amount of energy. Then I thought of using wooden materials. Since trees originally intake CO<sub>2</sub> and fix it to the body to grow, they hold CO<sub>2</sub> unless they are burned. What is more, it is easy to reuse and separate wood. This is why I decided to use wood.”

However, Mr. Yoshihara was concerned that such reasons wouldn't be an attractive proposal. He decided to propose to use Kitayama Maruta under the motto of using wooden materials from a specific place of production “visibly.” He held a growing sense of urgency that Kitayama Maruta of Kyoto, his hometown may diminish with their mountains unless there was a demand. Mr. YOSHIHARA began to work for a traditional sukiya-style architecture company in Tokyo after completing his studies of architecture for eight years, then worked for a design firm working on wooden architecture mainly including sukiya-style architecture in Kyoto for about ten years. Mr. Yoshihara was familiar with sukiya-style architecture and Kitayama Maruta, and knew very well about such high quality and also the fact that they are facing a large problem with difficulty of forest management due to decrease of demands. On the other hand, Mr. Yoshihara thought that there may be a problem with those who use Kitayama Maruta. It is because he thought that demands for Kitayama Maruta would not increase by simply trying to redefine them as the essential materials for sukiya-style architecture.

He visited the warehouse of Kyoto Kitayama Maruta Union to directly purchase the materials.



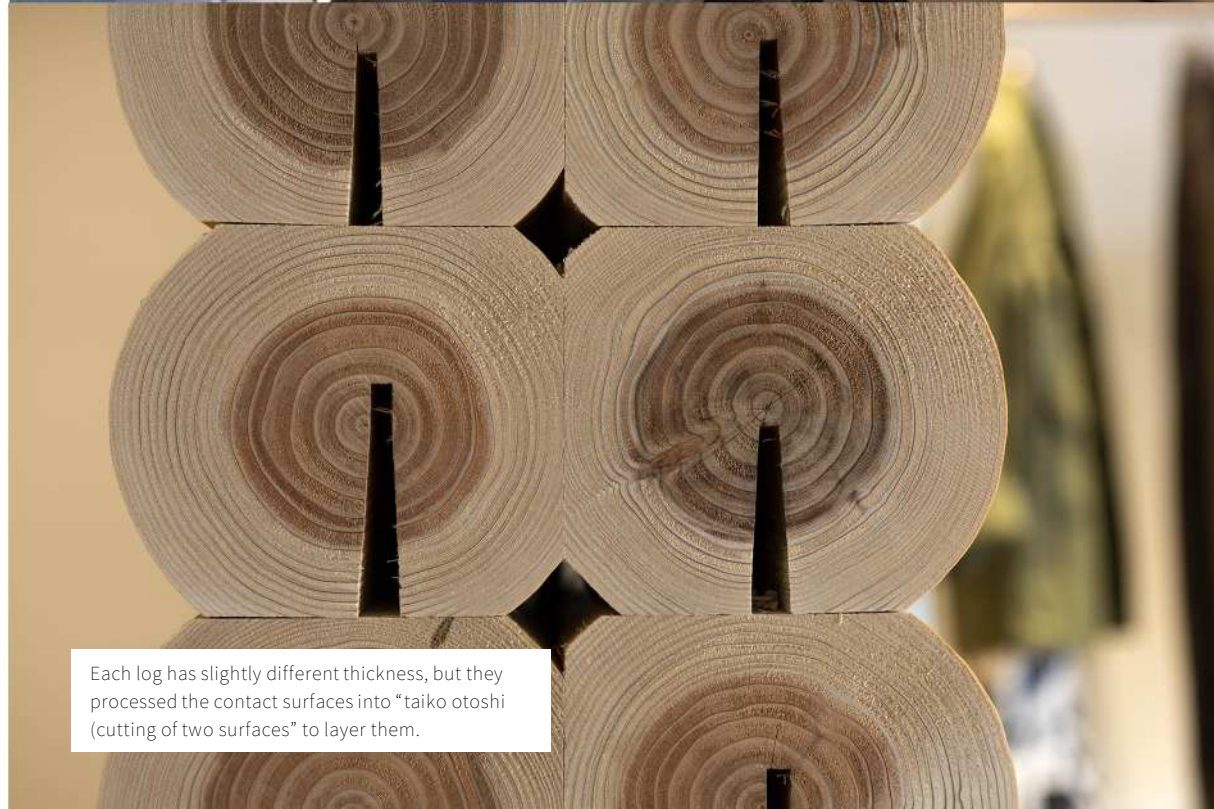


## Using them without craftsmanship

Mr. Yoshihara proposed to the representative of “Shinzone” that he wished to purchase Kitayama Maruta in bulk as much as possible to merchandize them without using advanced techniques since it is not wise to use only few of them as precious wood under the circumstance where the demands for Kitayama Maruta, such historically valuable materials are decreasing and the production system of Kitayama Maruta as the traditional industry continued for hundreds of years is in a crisis.

“I thought of using them for partitions inside the store by laying them horizontally. It doesn’t require advanced techniques. It is true that the widths are slightly different and the top and bottom have different thicknesses, but by shaving the surfaces contacting the other log surfaces, they could be beautifully layered. Vertically piled, they give modern impression. Then we made a hole to see through the other side. We can use them not only in a simple way but also in bulk. I did not only propose to use wood to the representative, but I made a presentation to insist that it was to preserve Kitayama Maruta tradition and it was a realistic and effective step for it. The representative agreed with me.”

Shinzone was about to promote the release of a separately-ordered collection using discard denim for opening of the new store and sympathized with YOSHIHARAGUMI’s advancing message of “preserving Kitayama Sugi and energizing the mountains,” and approved the offer understanding that it would cost more than using normal wooden materials.



Each log has slightly different thickness, but they processed the contact surfaces into “taiko otoshi (cutting of two surfaces” to layer them.



Sukiya-style is now considered to be one of the most prestigious traditional construction methods which is like an unchangeable rule. However, it emerged in the era when Shoinzukuri architecture was the most popular, confronting the world of the formality with white walls and straight lines which was to symbolize authority.

“Sukiya-style architecture uses unprocessed irregular wood with bark for rooms as well as mud walls which may not have been common at all for Shoinzukuri architecture as the mainstream of the time. That is to say, it was an unprecedented and ‘punk’ (innovative) style. I think it is very important. Sukiya style should not rest on its tradition and become arrogant, but it has to keep the spirit of punk. Of course, it does not mean we can do everything we’d like to do. I am sure that I know and admire the beauty and technique of traditional sukiya style since I have learned it. I know they are not typical materials that everyone can handle, and there may be things we shouldn’t do. So, what is important is to deform such tradition while understanding it. I hope it will lead to a new use of Kitayama Maruta and consequently the mountains will be preserved.”

Mr. Yoshihara wishes to continuously try new things as a sukiya venture who knows about sukiya style. He is one of the new users of Kitayama Maruta.

When vertically used, a metal pole was inserted into Kitayama Maruta to attach them to the floor and ceiling.



## Case Study

“Polished-log wooden floor panel”  
Gentleness of the polished surface can be felt  
on the soles of feet

### Gohan-ya Isshin Kyoto

Wood Design Award 2023

Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Special Award (Minister  
in charge of International Exposition Award)

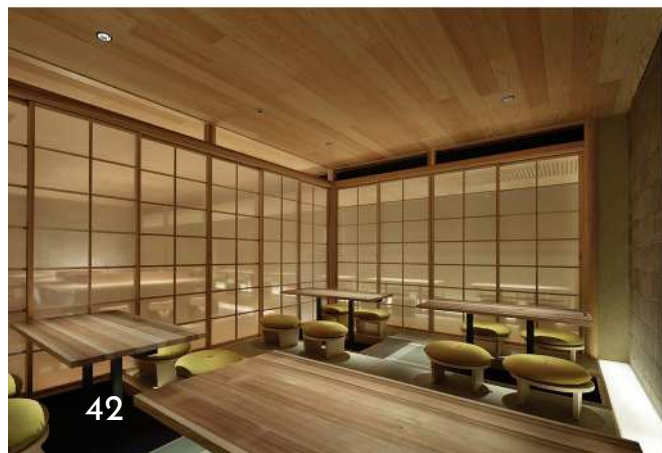
Kitayama Maruta have highly artistic expression  
with ultimate integration of glossed wood and texture  
of hands.

To maximize the presentation of such beautiful  
expression and gentle texture, we devised “polished-  
log wooden floor panels.” By dividing 1200mm-long  
Kitayama Maruta into four in a vertical direction and  
processing them so that the contact surfaces are  
made to have bumps (honzane process), and  
attaching them to panel base and then to the floor,  
we can make a new type of expression in the space  
with a comfortable feeling on the soles of the feet  
with the surfaces of Kitayama Maruta of natural  
shape continuing like a tapered log.

“Gohan-ya Isshin Kyoto” is a modern Japanese-  
style restaurant where we can experience the kitchen  
(“kudo”), the center of ancient Japanese people’s  
living with the scent of rice and its surrounding  
dining scene in the modern daily use atmosphere. In  
this restaurant, they use polished Kitayama Maruta  
which may be crushed into pellets as fuel due to the  
difference in size and scratches and built the space  
mainly with “polished-log wooden floor panel” on  
which people can feel the gentleness of the polished  
surface. Furthermore, they processed the remaining  
cores to 25mm of thickness and used them for the  
wooden floor material and ceiling material for strip  
flooring. By using all materials without waste, they  
practice the spirit of “mottainai (let’s not waste)” held  
by Japanese people.

Designed by: TDO + Moonbalance

Constructed by: Misaki Kogei



## Case Study

Using Kitayama Maruta and  
discarded materials

# Daimaru Kyoto

The restaurant floor of Daimaru Kyoto was renewed in September 2023 in 49 years.

While keeping their existing “space enjoyed by three-generation families,” the interior was renovated, and the space with round shapes using plaster looks new and creates a somehow warm and comfortable environment.

In such space, Kitayama Maruta are used for aisles, etc. as the element which shows Kyoto’s tradition and also comforts people. A total of nine logs with artificial bumps were installed.

In addition, “Koto Hotto Terrace” loved as the “roof square” was partially renewed, with many unique tables and chairs made of Kyoto’s wooden materials.

The new way of using the furniture as both a chair and table is especially impressive. Kitayama Maruta brighten up the new relaxation place.





## Case Study

Safe wood education square for  
parents and kids

### **Aeon Mall Kyoto Katsuragawa Mokuiku Hiroba**

Aeon Mall Kyoto Katsuragawa provides a wood education square aiming to become a shopping mall with comfortable children's facility environment for families to enjoy so much that they wish to visit every day.

For the wooden materials, we procured Kitayama Sugi from Kyoto Prefecture in order to keep connection with the local community. We also used many Kitayama Maruta for the wooden tunnel and partitions by taking advantage of their shapes.

Upper image: Entire view of the square  
Lower left image: Polished logs and chamfered  
columns used for partitions  
Lower right image: Wooden tunnel made of the  
polished logs

Designed and constructed by: Green Display Co., Ltd.



# Case Study

“Agreement on promotion to use Kitayama Sugi for buildings, etc.”

Initiatives by user companies

Kyoto City

Uchida Yoko Co., Ltd.

Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

Nice Corporation

Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank Limited.



## About agreement

### Agreement on promotion to use Kitayama Sugi for buildings, etc.

On August 23, 2022, for the purpose of mutual collaboration, etc. concerning sustainable and sound development of Kitayama forestry as well as promotion to use Kitayama Sugi, Kyoto City and Kitayama Sugi user companies (Uchida Yoko Co., Ltd., Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd., Nice Corporation, Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank Limited), producers (Kyoto Kitayama Maruta Union, Keihoku Precious Wood Union) entered in to the “agreement on promotion to use Kitayama Sugi for buildings, etc.” The following are their approaches.

(Users)	Uchida Yoko Co., Ltd. Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd. Nice Corporation Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank Limited	x	(Producers)	Kyoto Kitayama Maruta Union Keihoku Precious Wood Union	x	Kyoto City
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The user group and producer group of Kitayama Sugi have entered into an agreement with Kyoto City for sustainable development of Kitayama forestry and contribution to SDGs and 2050 carbon neutrality, etc. by promoting mutual collaboration and activities through cooperation concerning active use and stable supply of

#### Agreement on promotion to use Kitayama Sugi for buildings, etc.



**Agreement date: August 23, 2022**  
**Effective period: From agreement date to end-March 2026**  
**Coverage: Nationwide**

- **The user group's concept of promotion to use Kitayama Sugi**
  - Contribute to succession of techniques and culture concerning Kitayama forestry, promotion of local community, SDGs and 2050 carbon neutrality, etc. by actively using Kitayama Sugi
- **Efforts for achievement of the user group's concept**
  - Actively consider use of, or try to use Kitayama Sugi for business potentially contributing to improvement of charm of Kitayama Sugi
  - Work on introduction of charm and encourage penetration, research and development for exploration of new use and new products of Kitayama Sugi, consideration, etc. of policies including commercial trust, etc. for securement, etc. of production land of Kitayama Sugi for promotion to use Kitayama Sugi
- **The producer group's concept of promotion to use Kitayama Sugi**
  - Contribute to circulating use of forest resources, SDGs and 2050 carbon neutrality, etc. by cooperation for stable supply of Kitayama Sugi
- **Efforts for achievement of the producer group's concept**
  - Arrange the supply system of Kitayama Sugi for preparation of buildings, etc. of the users and provide supply required quality and volume as needed.
- **Support from Kyoto City for achievement**
  - Actively support through technical advice and information provision of subsidy system, etc. and publicity, etc. of the efforts. Provide information, etc. of policies concerning cultural promotion of wood

# Kyoto City Hall Headquarters Japanese-style room

The building of Kyoto City Hall Headquarters was repaired for the maintenance purpose due to the problem of seismic resistance and deterioration.

The policy of this maintenance work was to preserve and restore the historical value of the headquarters building constructed approximately 100 years ago as well as improving it so as to experience the excellent history, culture and hospitality of Kyoto. A Japanese-style room was newly installed with the help of donations.

For the Japanese-style room, wooden materials used for traditional Japanese sukiya-style architecture were richly utilized and a furnace for tea ceremony was also installed. This space is used to welcome many guests including guests of honor to present them the culture of wood.

For the interior and entrance, various kinds of wooden materials are used; including toko-bashiras of natural tapered logs, nageshi (Frieze rails) of polished logs, chamfered columns of Kitayama Maruta of which beautiful grains are well shown as well as Kurinaguri logs, hiba-sabi (rust finish cypress), kobusi-logs with bark by diversified processing method.

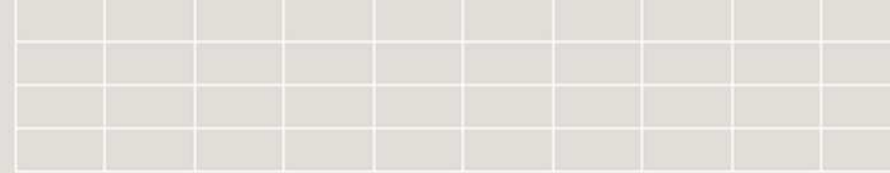
Upper image: Japanese-style room

Lower image: Entrance





Initiative case | UCHIDA YOKO Co., Ltd.



Assembled Japanese-style room / louver, etc.

## UCHIDA YOKO Products using domestic materials

An assembled Japanese-style room “Kumitate” is made of domestic cedar materials designated for indoor installation. It provides experiences of the wood texture, gloss, scent, etc. by using polished Kitayama Maruta for the central toko-bashiras in the space structured mainly with square timbers.

Although it is a small room, it contains all of the elements of a Japanese-style room, producing a Japanese-style space as a display as well as a place for actual experience. It also enhances the production effect by showing projection mapping in the back of shoji (sliding paper screen).

They also promote active use of Kitayama Maruta for various products such as louvers, benches and name plates, etc.

Upper image: Assembled Japanese-style room “Kumitate”

Lower left image:

A louver of polished logs installed in the back of the reception counter of the headquarters

Lower center image:

A bench made of Kitayama Sugi

Lower right image:

A name plate made of Kitayama Sugi



Design of Kumitate by: Hokkaido University / Unno Kensetsu Co., Ltd.  
Louver / bench: Uchida Yoko Co., Ltd.

## Exhibition booth

# “Ki to Kurashi no Hakurankai (wood living exhibition) Exhibition booth

“Ki to Kurashi no Hakurankai (wood living exhibition)” hosted by Nice introduces the latest eco-friendly and health-conscious products with attendance of domestic construction material and housing equipment manufactures in one place. Furthermore, visitors can see, touch and experience to learn about the products, techniques and information mainly on domestic materials.

Kikuchi Construction displayed its unique exhibition booth using Kitayama Maruta with the concept of “Ochaya (teahouse) architecture.” Ochaya is a small-scale building mainly used for entertainment such as waka (31-syllable poem), renga (linked poem), banquet represented by “Shokintei” and “Shoiken” in Katsura Imperial Villa. Although the external appearance is designed as a country-style house and “soan (thatched hut)” with logs and bamboos, the internal fusuma (paper sliding door) and handle have been uniquely decorated with slight glossiness of sensitivity preferred by the nobility. This booth is made with such image.

Along with the exhibition booth space which was shaped in an isosceles right angle, fan-shaped rafters were placed in the back of the frontage supported with an 11-meter-long eave girder and a triangle-shaped tatami-room with alcove structured with curved walls. Including the thin polished log eave girder of 11 meter long with little difference in the thickness between the top and bottom which can be produced only with Kitayama Maruta. Furthermore, Kitayama Maruta were used for rafters, pillars, and even toko-gamachi, so that visitors could directly see and touch their charm.





Initiative case | Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

Office tearoom

## Refine Holdings Co., Ltd.

“Refine Holdings Co., Ltd.” has many bases of solvent recycling business and environmental engineering business domestically and internationally, and also develops “mind refining business” for the purpose of rebuilding of mind to create the society of hospitality with the mission to achieve sustainability of humankind in addition to refining the business of resources and environment.

In the “mind refining business,” various approaches have been taken such as the promotion of self growth through excitement and feeling of happiness felt from traditional Japanese culture including calligraphy, crafts, and kimono to aim for a spiritually rich lifestyle. As a part of such approaches, they built a full-scale tearoom in the office located in Marunouchi, Tokyo in end-June 2023.

This room was not only made to serve international guest with Japanese culture, but it was also made from the desire that the employees working in the office place themselves in their daily life to break out of their shells and to be conscious about what they need to grow.

It is a chair-style tearoom which is easy to use in the modern lifestyle. It is designed to place “ryureijoku (tea table for tea making)” and “kikka (tea table for drinking)” on the tatami floor. Various events will be held here.

Designed and constructed by Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.



Initiative case | Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

Office tearoom

## J.S.T Mfg. Co., Ltd. Shanghai factory VIP room

“J.S.T Mfg. Co., Ltd.” is a major global electronics manufacturer mainly producing connectors and pressure terminals, with 48 overseas bases.

In the VIP room in its Shanghai factory building, they installed an authentic tearoom for the purpose of having communication with the clients with tea ceremony of Japanese culture.

It has authentic facilities from chumon (an internal gate) to roji (a garden auxiliary to the tearoom) and tsukubai (a washbasin set in a Japanese-style garden) for the tearoom, having two tearooms; an 8-jo Japanese-style room (tatami style) and ryureiseki (chair style) and mizuya (a washing place in tea ceremony).



Designed by: Koji Yamaguchi, Noriaki Okabe Architecture Network  
Constructed by: Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.



Initiative case | Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

House interior

# Stair handrail renovation

It is a staircase using polished Kitayama Maruta with nice texture for the handrail.

This staircase uses a log for a pillar or crawl space support post, but not a small log for a rafter. Since it is not a handrail to “grip,” but more of a top rail to “put a hand on,” polished Kitayama Maruta is used.

Utilizing Kitayama Maruta for stairs, we can enjoy a different atmosphere from pillars feeling presence of Kitayama Maruta.



Designed and constructed by Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

Office interior

## Nice's office lignification renovation

Nice has proceeded with lignification renovation of the headquarters' building since 2022. One of those lignification renovations is polished Kitayama Maruta covering a part of the handrail of spiral staircase in the 1st floor lobby and a part of the handrail of the 2nd floor reception space. In addition, a model exhibition space of a Japanese-style room using Kitayama natural tapered logs and polished Kitayama Maruta for part of the 1st floor lounge was installed. The precise quality of material and smooth, glossy and beautiful texture of Kitayama Maruta with approximately 600 years of history have been enjoyed by the visitors.

Lower left image:

Polished Kitayama Maruta (edajime (branch pruning to reduce sap flow), honjikomi (process of branch pruning and bark stripping) of total length of 9m was installed on the 2nd floor.

Lower right image:

A model exhibition space with a classical Japanese-style room of sukiya-style architecture remodeled into a modern style by design and construction of Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd. Kitayama natural tapered logs are used for toko-bashiras, polished Kitayama Maruta for agarikamachi (piece of wood at the front edge of an entranceway floor) of the tatami space and Kitayama chamfered columns for table legs.



Designed and constructed by Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.



## Sustainable Management Promotion Organization office entrance

An entrance wall is inspired by the forests in Kitayama region, Kyoto. Plate materials made by sawing Kitayama Maruta into different sizes are used to express “Daisugi cultivation,” silviculture method specific to Kitayama region.

Products including polished logs and natural deshibori maruta (logs with natural bumpy tapering), small logs, chamfered columns among Kitayama Maruta, allows people to enjoy the various expressions of each texture. In this office, coat hangers using Kitayama Sugi branches and chairs using Kitayama Maruta as well as objects, etc. for various ways of introduction of logs are installed.

Lower left image:  
Coat hanger

Central image:  
Chairs in a meeting space

Lower right:  
Object to allow us to feel the texture

Design and supervised : Nice Corporation



Hospital interior

# Kyoto ENT Surgicenter

It is a clinic which has obtained a patent for surgeries requiring special techniques and is visited by many patients for treatment from overseas. Kitayama Maruta are used for the accent walls and stair handrails and top rails.

The texture of Kitayama Maruta with 600 years of history harmonizes with the sophisticated design and produces a calm and warm space.

For the walls in the entrance and consulting room, accent walls are installed by modifying “yoroibari (louvered wall)” to present various grains and textures. In addition, “Kitayama rafters” are used for the stair handrails and “Kitayama natural deshibori logs” are used for the top rails, taking advantage of the beautiful and smooth texture specific to Kitayama Sugi.

Lower left image:  
Handrails and top rails with smooth texture of Kitayama Maruta

Lower right image:  
Consulting room with accent walls

Designed by: SHINOHE ARCHITECTS / Kotaro Shinohe  
Constructed by: Nice Corporation





Gift product distribution /  
Industry-academia collaboration

## Distribution of Kitayama Sugi products as gifts / Industry-academia collaboration

Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank Limited operates the monthly councils as the secretariat of the “agreement on promotion to use Kitayama Sugi for buildings, etc.” executed in August 2022 as well as considering introduction of charm and penetration and awareness building of Kitayama Sugi and regional revitalization policies starting from Kitayama forestry.

In the fiscal year of 2022, we distributed a table clock, chopsticks, ballpoint pen made of Kitayama Sugi to our customers as the anniversary gifts of our Kyoto and Otsu branches. We also actively promoted their use by distributing a nameplate (gift) and bookmarker (souvenir) of Kitayama Sugi to our corporate customers. In addition, we collaborated with the colleges in Kyoto City to formulate and promote industry-academia collaboration plans to explore new ways of using the students’ ideas.

In the future, we are planning to consider policies to utilize the forest trust to secure the production land of Kitayama Maruta and to pass on the culture of wood, etc.

Upper image: Nameplate for corporate customers (gift)

Lower left: Bookmarker for Kitayama corporate customers (souvenir)

Center image: Chopsticks distributed for anniversary

Lower right image: Ballpoint pen distributed for anniversary



# Case Studies

Other cases of utilization and  
application





General residence

## Seihitsu no Su (Home of tranquility)

It is a case of efficient use of polished Kitayama Maruta pillars for a house.

In order to avoid the noise of concentrated houses, the house was separated by the retaining walls made with plastering in three directions, as open as possible to the sky, creating very quiet and calm space.

It is constructed with surfaces where the structural materials are hidden in the walls, and only the polished Kitayama Maruta appear standing in the living room with the dining area on the 1st floor.

These polished log pillars become the symbolic presence by creating the flow line as the anchorage and the focus from viewpoints and also softly separating spaces. We can also take natural gentleness into our lives by feeling mild expressions.

Infinitive imagination can be evoked not by “not existing” but rather by “existing.”

Designed by: TDO + Moonbalance  
Constructed by: Amerika-ya Co., Ltd.



General residence

## House with a gallery

“Kita-ku, Kyoto City: House with a gallery” constructed by Takeuchi Komuten known for “wood house in Kyoto” and “custom house” won the award of excellence at the 4th “Kyoto wood house building award project.”

“Kita-ku, Kyoto City: House with a gallery” is a multipurpose house with gallery space and used polished Kitayama Maruta for the structure.

The woodwork details of polished Kitayama Maruta pillars and beams was processed by hand carving by the carpenters and the log pillars became an accent of simple space. Such visibility of carpenters’ work was also highly evaluated.

Sekishu kawara (tiles) from Shimane Pref. were placed in the entrance deck and earth floor and polished Kitayama Maruta is also used for the independent pillar of the entrance deck.

Designed and constructed by: Takeuchi Komuten Co., Ltd.



Office interior

## Office renovation

A used case of polished Kitayama Maruta for wall designs of the customer reception room and office entrance, handrails, etc.

Designed and constructed by: Rijinsya



General residence

## Partitions

A used case of polished Kitayama Maruta with beautiful texture for a modern design apartment. They were embedded into the partition between the living room and next room with glass in between for modern design.

Kitayama Maruta melt in the western-style design seamlessly and their gentleness unique to natural materials and softness give comfort to the space with straight lines.

Designed by: Rideaux Inc.





Use for structural materials

## SCG forest training building “Seikisha”

Kitayama Maruta were used for the structural materials of the forest training facilities of Seiki Community Group. When looking up at the ceiling, you can see 12 Kitayama Maruta with a maximum length of 8m. Maximumly 8-meter-long Kitayama Maruta were used for the truss structural materials as well as the members of this truss structures.

Designed by: Rijinsya / Constructed by: Tanaka Komuten



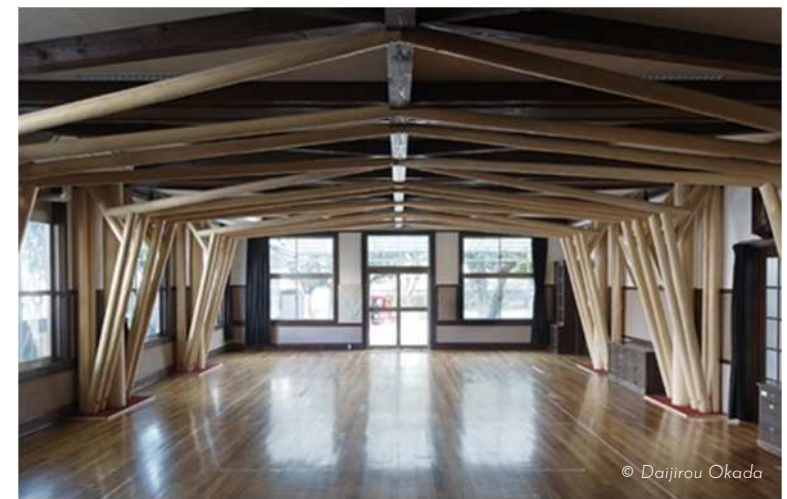
Use for structural materials

## W.M. Vories Church of Resurrection 100th anniversary large-scale renovation

A case of aseismatic renovation of Kyoto Church of Resurrection designed by William Merrell Vories. With the truss structure of Kitayama Maruta, it takes aseismatic element even in an open space by assembling the frames tolerable to seismic force only with the axis materials.

The structure of the crossed vault ceiling of Kitayama Maruta was considered by taking Vories' architecture of Gothic style into account.

Designed and constructed by: SOL



Kitayama Maruta products





## Products

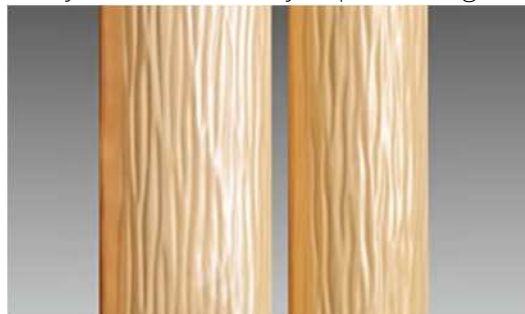
### Kitayama Maruta lineups

Polished Kitayama Maruta



The basic product of Kitayama Maruta. Its quality is precise and knot-free, and the wood surface is smooth and glossy with straight grains. It is also the closest to the perfect circle and with only a slight difference between the bottom and top.

Kitayama artificially tapered log



Natural wavy tapering on the surface is made artificially. The tapering patterns are made by wrapping chopstick-shaped materials around the stem two to three years before felling. It is generally used for toko-bashiras.

Kitayama natural deshibori maruta  
(logs with natural bumpy tapering)



Natural bumps and wavy tapering are naturally made on the surface, and various expressions can be seen depending on the kind, soil quality and sunshine. Mainly used for toko-bashiras.

Kitayama rafter (small log)



Kitayama Maruta for rafter material. With a plain surface and little difference in thickness between the top and bottom, it is used for tearooms and sukiya-style housings. It is recently used as decorative material such as handrails and louvers.

Kitayama chirimen shibori maruta  
(logs with crape tapering)



A kind of natural tapered log. While deshibori have bumpy and wavy tapering, this kind has groove-like tapering, which makes it as very rare.

Kitayama chamfered column



Polished log processed with a hatchet, etc. with the surface of the log left to extract the beauty of the grains.

## Specification

### Specifications of Kitayama Maruta

Product name	Polished log	Natural deshibori maruta / Chirimen shibori maruta	Artificial tapered log	Rafter	Face skin column
Wood type	Kitayama Maruta	Kitayama Maruta	Kitayama Maruta	Kitayama Maruta	Kitayama Maruta
Length The length in ( ) is practically usable	3m, 4 m (2.9m, 3.9m)	3m (2.9m)	3m (2.9m)	0.9m~4m	3m (2.9m)
Special order size The length in ( ) is practically usable	5~8m	4m (3.9m)	4m (3.9m)	—	4m (3.9m)
Diameter (top)	Up to approx. $\phi 60\text{mm}$ ~200mm	Up to approx. $\phi 105\text{mm}$ ~200mm	Up to approx. $\phi 105\text{mm}$ ~200mm	$\phi 30$ ~60mm	—
Diameter (eye level)	—	—	—	—	Up to approx. $90 \times 90\text{mm}$ ~ $150 \times 150\text{mm}$
Major use	Ornamental post, toko-bashira, ridgepole, frost protector, plate, handrail, etc.	Toko-bashira, exposed column, etc.	Toko-bashira, exposed column, etc.	Exposed rafter, handrail, louver, etc.	Toko-bashira, exposed column, etc.
Feature	No tapering patterns on the wood surface, which is smooth and glossy. Split in a piece.	Glossy surface with naturally occurring bumpy tapering patterns. Split in a piece.	Glossy surface with naturally occurring wavy tapering patterns. Split in a piece.  Logs are selected from Kitayama Sugi which are made into polished logs, wrapped with plastic splints with wire to make tapering patterns by taking advantage of two to three years of growth.	Thinner than polished logs called also “small log.” No tapering pattern on the smooth and glossy surface. Some are split in a piece but others are not.	Polished log or natural deshibori maruta is processed into four-surfaced column by leaving approx. 1.5cm of the four corners of the bark parts, or chipped with hatchet.  On the chipped surface, in the case of polished log, plain and beautiful Nakamoku (medium burl wood grain) appears and in the case of natural deshibori maruta, appear plain and unique grains such as Tamamoku (burl figured wood)s. Split in a piece.



## Products

### Kitayama Maruta products (wall material / wainscot)

#### Rakuhoku

Products developed for wainscots and wall boards as a new use of Kitayama Maruta. The wood surfaces and grains are both beautiful. They are broadly used for public facilities, shops, housings, etc.



#### Koto Natural

Decorative materials using the tapering patterns naturally occurring on the surface of natural deshibori maruta. Its fascinating and soft expression makes spaces of hospitality more elegant.



## Products

### Kitayama Maruta products (decorative materials)

#### Kitayama natural deshibori maruta consolidated plywood Murakumo

By making a natural deshibori log into board material, its mysterious and beautiful grain appears. The consolidation process allows them to have equivalent strength to broad-leave tree. It is the best material for the top plate of a table or counter.





## Products

### Kitayama Maruta products (Interior)

#### KITAYAMA

An interior louver using Kitayama natural deshibori maruta.

Beautiful surface, color, and smooth touch of natural deshibori maruta (bumpy tapering) show various expressions by the way it is lit, producing a modern-taste accent in the space.



## Products

### Kitayama Maruta products (Interior)

#### Partition made of Kitayama Maruta and glass

A partition made of a unique combination of straight and fascinating surface of polished Kitayama Maruta and glass that produces a stylish yet soft impression. It can be used for both apartments and offices.





## Contact

### Contact information for Kitayama Sugi /Kitayama Maruta products, etc.

#### 【Producers】

Kyoto Kitayama Log Production  
Union

TEL : 075-406-2955

MAIL: info@kyotokitayamamaruta.com

Keihoku Precious Wood Production Union

TEL : 075-852-0490

MAIL: info@keihoku-meikyou.jp

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#### 【User companies】

UCHIDA YOKO Co., Ltd.

TEL : 03-5634-6628

MAIL: ml-govt@uchida.co.jp

Kikuchi Construction Co., Ltd.

TEL : 045-503-0303

MAIL: info@kikuchi-kensetsu.co.jp

Nice Corporation

PURCHASING LUMBER DIVISION

TEL : 045-503-3023

MAIL: info@nice.co.jp

Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank, Ltd

Kyoto Branch, Corporate Sales Section 1

TEL : 075-212-6820

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